

# Church Discipline

Colleagues,

Only once in my life—almost 70 years now—did I experience a case of church discipline. I was hardly a major player in the event. But I was present—as an uncomprehending child—in the Sunday morning service 60 years ago when a member was formally excommunicated from Trinity Lutheran Church in Coal Valley, Illinois. Asking my dad what that was all about, I can remember only that “he left his wife and ran off with another man’s wife, and after we did all we could with him, he wouldn’t repent of this sin. So he was put out of the congregation.”

Rare as such practice may be these days in US Lutheranism, or even in other mainline churches, it is not unknown elsewhere in world Lutheranism. It was on Dave and Darlene Schneider’s agenda when we visited them earlier this year in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Schneiders have been missionary teachers for the past nine years at the Lutheran Theological Seminary Enhlanhleni. [To pronounce Enhlanhleni, by the way, identify the four syllables and clear your throat to pronounce each “h.”] Their daughter Carolyn is a Crossings board member and a regular contributor for the text studies on this listserve. Church Discipline is practiced in the seminary’s denomination, the Lutheran Church in South Africa. So it’s part of the course in Pastoral Theology that Dave teaches. Through the years he’s seen how it is done in the LCSA, and sees the need for that practice to be re-grounded in the Gospel.

*He says;*

*“First of all, apparently the only sin for which a member is disciplined is that of getting pregnant outside marriage, and usually the man involved is left out of the disciplinary process. Even if the sinner repents, she is not immediately*

*absolved and restored to the Lord's table of Holy Communion. That happens only after the birth and Baptism of the baby."*

So he's done Bible study on the topic with his students "wondering to what extent I should lead my students to be critical of the prevailing system in the Church. After all, a Seminary is not supposed to be a place of revolution. Or is it?"

What follows is basically the results put together by a committee of students who took the best from the papers of the whole class. Dave took these theses, "reshaped and expanded them a bit" and presented them as "Ideas for Discussion" at the May meeting of the pastors and missionaries of the KwaZulu-Natal Diocese. Did the students ever get mentioned in Dave's presentation? It's not clear. His comment when sending us the text was: "The pastors need to know what is being taught at the Seminary. If there is hot discussion, let it come to me, rather than to the new Seminary graduates."

Peace & Joy!

Ed

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## **CHURCH DISCIPLINE: IDEAS FOR DISCUSSION**

1. The goal of church discipline is not to punish, but to restore the sinner (Galatians 6:1), win back the brother/sister (Matthew 18:15), welcome back the penitent sinner (Luke 15:24), find the lost (Luke 19:9), save the sinner's spirit (1 Corinthians 5:5).
2. The work of church discipline is done in a gentle manner, helping the sinner to carry the burden. (Galatians 6:1-2)
3. Church discipline is done inside the Church, with Christians who have sinned (1 Corinthians 5:12-13).

Although the Law and Gospel proclaimed to someone outside the Church (Luke 23:42-43) is the same Word used in Church Discipline, the aim of evangelizing the outsider is to bring him into the Church. The aim of Church Discipline is to keep in the Church some one who has sinned.

4. Sins to be disciplined include: sexual immorality, greed, idolatry, slander, drunkenness, swindling. ( 1 Corinthians 5:11)
5. If the brother sins, go and tell him his fault privately. If he listens (repents), you have gained the brother. (Matthew 18:15)
6. If he doesn't listen, take one or two witnesses. If he hears (repents), you have gained the brother. (Matthew 18:16)
7. If he doesn't listen to you and the witnesses, take the matter to the church (congregation). If he listens to the voice of the church, you have gained him back. If he refuses to listen to the congregation, expel him from the congregation and from the special privileges of membership, but not from hearing the Word of God. (Matthew 18:17, 1 Corinthians 5:13)
8. If the sinner is restored, won back, the Church makes a joyful celebration, as God and the holy angels do in heaven. (Luke 15:7, 10, 22-24)
9. Sin confessed by a penitent sinner is absolved immediately-the same day. (John 8:11, Luke 19:9, Luke 15:21-24, 2 Samuel 12:13)
10. A repentant sinner who has been forgiven and absolved may participate in the Sacrament of the Altar as soon as it is offered by the Church. Only manifest and impenitent sinners are excommunicated from the sacrament and fellowship of the Church. (Smalcald Articles Part III, Article IX)
11. According to the Gospel, the punishment of sin has been

carried by Christ. (Is. 53:4-6, 1 Cor. 15:3). The Church has no right to punish a penitent, absolved sinner.

12. Church leaders need to be concerned also about the “older brother/sister” who may become angry about forgiveness. (Luke 15:28-32)
13. Church discipline is the work of God. It concerns His wrath (not our personal anger) about sin and His gracious forgiveness. We church people are only His earthly instruments, to accomplish His purposes. (John 20:21-23, Matthew 18:18-20)
14. Even after Absolution and forgiveness, there may still be earthly results of sin (Luke 23:39-43), or even some further lesson from God (2 Samuel 12:14). But the forgiveness of God stands sure.

David Schneider  
15 May, 2000

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## Coping with Chaos

Colleagues,

Robin sent over this slice-of-life for me to send on to you today. It's powerful.

Peace & Joy!

Ed Schroeder

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## GOD SAID

“Wild and waste” is the way the Bible I was reading translates

“tohu va-vohu” in the Hebrew text of Genesis 1:2. “When the earth was wild and waste darkness over the face of Ocean, rushing spirit of God hovering over the face of the waters—” In the footnote it adds “indicating emptiness.”

What amazed me, as if I had never seen it before, was the sense of God’s ordering, which merely by a word, eliminated the chaos. “God said.”

I thought about wild, wasting emptiness and wondered if it might be another way of expressing sin. It’s as if we’re trying to reach around God, assuming God is keeping the best stuff behind God’s back, and when we open our hand to see what we’ve retrieved, we’re overwhelmed by the wild, wasting emptiness that sin eventually is for us. Tohu va-vohu.

I inhabit two very different spaces these day – both of which seem prone to tohu va-vohu. The first is our upper middle class household with three teenagers and two dogs. The other is the inner city congregation I pastor.

In the first, as our children and their enormous energy bounce around trying to figure out who they are independent of my husband and me, we see them careening dangerously close to wild, wasting emptiness that will have permanent consequences in their lives. And so we try to stand in the gap, keeping them from tohu va-vohu-ing themselves into non-existence before they even get to adulthood. We also feel the effects of the wild, wasting emptiness as our relationship with each other lurches forward.

In the second, the inner city parish, it’s as if there’s a huge tear in God’s ordering of the universe and tohu va-vohu has spilled out all over north St. Louis covering everything and everybody with wild, wasting emptiness. Everyone has breathed it into their lungs, finds it impossible to keep their clothes and shoes free of it. Some have even turned and said “Wild, wasting

emptiness is all there is and so we give ourselves to the chaos.”

And yet human beings fight the rips in God’s order – Million Man March, Million Mom March, Habitat for Humanity – trying to keep chaos from rushing in. Register our guns, care for our families, fight back entropy.

God said. How can words make any difference in these difficult situations? Don’t we need fire to fight fire? It seems that we usually only trade one set of tyrants for another in revolution, but what else can we do? God said. It’s too easy. It’s too weak. It’s too amorphous. We need a hard line strategy to pull ourselves back from the brink of destruction.

It’s taken me a month to get beyond “brink of destruction” – a hellacious month I might add. I’ve come back to these words over and over again; hoping “the answer” would appear. Theologically, I know it’s time to bring Jesus into the mix, but somehow, at this juncture, imposing Jesus seems less than honest and less than helpful. Yet ultimately I know he’s the answer to what’s gnawing at me.

When I finally stopped running in fear of the *tohu va-vohu* in my life, I realized that I have experienced three distinct moments of “God Said” through Christ in the last couple of weeks.

The first is a moment that happened at our weekly men’s lunch/Bible study. Rooster and John almost got into a fist fight as John tried to get the men to sit down and listen BEFORE they ate and Rooster challenged him about having any authority to make such a request. John then proceeded to tell the story of the prodigal son from Luke interspersed with snatches from his own life that matched the prodigal’s story. John told how he’d drunk and drugged so much that he ended up homeless, living in shelters or under bridges. He told of mornings, waking up

shaking so bad that he had to drink a pint just to stand up. Rooster nodded, laughed as he related to John's pain, listened like I'd never seen him listen before.

John told us that he finally realized how far he'd walked away from God. The pressure of God's judgment on his life was so great that he knew it was time to turn around. John told how the life, death and resurrection of Jesus had changed him and brought him to a new life that wasn't always easy, but was infinitely preferable to the way he had been living.

After lunch, Rooster came up to John and offered him a dollar (which John refused) because what he had said touched his heart so deeply that he had to respond. They shook hands, Rooster thanked John for his words and said he'd be back.

The second moment was at a Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship breakfast. A friend said I needed to visit these men and speak to them about our ministry. I was skeptical at best, not looking forward to meeting a bunch of men I didn't know, who may or may not appreciate female clergy, and who had no reason to help a mainline ministry (we're "dead," you know, according to most charismatic groups). But when we walked into the meeting, we were welcomed with open arms. After breakfast I was asked to speak. I told of our work on the north side and then at the end of the meeting they gathered for prayer. They asked me and the other pastor there, as well as anyone who felt the need, to sit in a circle and the men stood around us, praying. It felt like I was in the middle of Luke 8 when the woman who had hemorrhaged for twelve years was healed as she touched the hem of Jesus' garment as those men laid hands on me and prayed, some in tongues, some in English (one in Spanish). I felt power flow into me, peace settle in my soul as we all trusted together that Jesus had indeed sent the Holy Spirit into our midst to heal us.

The third moment came yesterday as I thought about the chaos, the wild, wasting emptiness that seems to engulf my life these days and I realized, like Job, that I might be tempted to curse God and die as so much of what I've held dear seems to be hanging by a thread, but I knew I wouldn't. Job had the privilege of speaking with God and having his life restored to him. I have the privilege of having God come to me, for me in the flesh and having not my old life restored, but new creation life born within me. The Word has touched me from the inside out and I am no longer the same. Though I still crater at times in the face of adversity, there is never that devolution into the abyss, which used to be my response to chaos. Curse God and die is no longer an option.

The power of God Said is in this poem by W.S. Merwin that I found in the front of Anne LaMott's latest book "Traveling Mercies".

*Listen*

*with the night falling we are saying thank you  
we are stopping on the bridge to bow from the railings  
we are running out of the glass rooms  
with our mouths full of food to look at the sky  
and say thank you  
we are standing by the water looking out  
in different directions  
back from a series of hospitals back from a mugging  
after funerals we are saying thank you  
after the news of the dead  
whether or not we knew them we are saying thank you  
in a culture up to its chin in shame  
living in the stench it has chosen we are saying thank you  
  
over telephones we are saying thank you  
in doorways and in the backs of cars and in elevators*



*remembering wars and the police at the back door  
and the beatings on stairs we are saying thank you*

*in the banks that use us we are saying thank you  
with the crooks in office with the rich and fashionable  
unchanged we go on saying thank you thank you*

*with the animals dying around us  
our lost feelings we are saying thank you  
with the forests falling faster than the minutes  
of our lives we are saying thank you  
with the words going out like cells of a brain  
with the cities growing over us like the earth  
we are saying thank you faster and faster  
with nobody listening we are saying thank you  
we are saying thank you and waving  
dark though it is*

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## **The Ownership Question- Whose We Are**

Colleagues,

Yesterday was the summer solstice. In the USA the saying goes: "Summertime and the livin' is easy." That's never been scientifically documented, and probably isn't true. But that's my excuse for sending out a sermon for this week's ThTh. Robin has her plate extra full these days. "Summertime easy" is not true for her. I've been out of town for two weeks and have had other stuff on my plate too. So here's a

homily. I was asked to be the preacher in our parish church, Bethel Lutheran in St. Louis, when our pastor was attending our regional synod assembly. It was June 4, 2000, the 7th Sunday of Easter.

Peace & Joy!

Ed

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## **Text: The RSL Gospel for the day, John 17: 6-19**

Hamlet had it wrong. "To be, or not to be" is not THE question. He left out one word: **W-h-o-s-e**. "Whose to be or whose not to be," that is THE question. All three scripture readings say that this a.m. Even today's Psalm, the first one in the Psalter. The difference between the wicked and the righteous is not behavior, but belonging. Where you are planted, is the psalm's picture-word.

Who you belong to, whose you are, that is the big question. How about us? The answer, it seems, is simple—at least for us. We're here in church this a.m. So we're Christians. Christ's people. We belong to Jesus. No problem, no sweat, piece of cake. Well.... is it really so?

Even if that were the case for this Sunday morning hour, there were 167 more hours since last Sunday's service. Who did we belong to during all those hours? Who all?

Even being in church is no guarantee that for this hour we belong to Christ. Our bodies and heads are here, sure. But for most of us, I suspect, what's **IN** our heads, what's **IN** our hearts—right now—is a scramble of other owners. Other agendas came with us when we walked into church. And we can't just shake our head or do some CPR on our hearts to change that. So we need help. That's what this whole worship hour wants to do. To get us

re-connected to the One we really belong to and then project that belonging beyond this place out into those 167 coming hours this week. That entails the wild expectation that this one hour can help to keep us belong to Christ through all those 167 hours coming up. Let's see if it works.

The formula that Jesus uses about us in today's Gospel is "You are in the world, but do not belong to the world."

There's no question that we are **IN** the world. The problem is the belonging. Our world makes its pitch in a zillion ways to get ownership of us, to get us to belong to it.

### **Diagnosis-1 Exposed to alien owners**

Who all haven't we belonged to in this week's past 167 hours? Who or what hasn't made a pitch to own us? Our own problems. Fears. Messages/tapes running in our heads. Memories. Feelings. That's just stuff on the inside. Outside owners: Other people making claims on our lives—even on our hearts. Advertising. How many hundreds (or is it thousands?) of ads haven't you seen/heard in the past 167 hours? All trying to get your attention—and then to get **YOU**. The goal for all of these alien owners is simple: Gotcha!

### **D-2 Hooked by an alien word**

"Hang onto this, trust this, do this, get this, take this course, adopt this diet, practice these seven principles, do these exercises – and you'll be more, have more, be better, than you were before." It's so easy to respond: "You, know, I believe that. I'm gonna go for it." If we could keep that stuff out of our heart, keep our hearts from hanging onto those pitches, we might squeak by. But partial commitment to alien owners is dicey; they regularly ask us to commit ourselves "whole-heartedly." When we Christian folk make whole-hearted commitments to anything other than the Christ who owns us, we

have to evict the prior owner. We belong to somebody else.

### **D-3 Dead in our tracks with these alien owners.**

It's not merely that such belonging to world-owners is a no-no. Worse than that, it's a killer. These aliens don't die for you; you give, pay, sacrifice, finally die for them. They leave you life-less even though you're still alive. That's especially true about the Life that Lasts—as I John 5 portrays it today. “God gave us the life that lasts, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life. When you don't have the Son, you don't have the life that lasts.” To “have the Son” is to be had by him. Ownership stuff. Whose you are. You can keep on going in daily life with alien owners and the alternate life they offer, but the God-gas-gauge on our dashboard says: Empty. How long can you run on empty?

### **A New Prognosis – to cross-out D-3**

Alternate ownership, not alien, but the kind we're created for. Christ's whole job on earth was regaining ownership of God's kids who got conned into going with alien owners. Folks caught in the world's “Gotcha.” Regaining ownership. Getting us to belong where we belong! That's one of the big words used in the N.T. for what he was doing: re-demption. This John 17 text is all about Jesus's role in God's ownership reclamation project. The last act is Jesus' “coming to the Father,” which is John's language for the grand finale of the cross. Last Thursday was the feast of the Ascension, the last movement of the grand finale. Jesus returns home—but not alone. He returns bringing all God's lost and strayed kids along with him.

The John 17 text is one-of-a-kind. A tete-a-tete between Two persons of the Trinity. Father and Son. Actually a monologue. Jesus talking to Abba. There's no other chapter in the Bible like it.

And the topic: Talking about us! How John the Evangelist got this material is a mystery. However he got it, he put it into his writing so we could benefit; so we could be insiders too—in more ways than one. Not just insiders listening in on this high-level exchange, but insiders, believers, to the whole operation.

### **A New Prognosis to cross out D-2:**

“Protected in your name” This new ownership persists in the very face of the world persisting in its opposition. “World hates them” says the text. That is strong language. “In someone’s name” is ownership language. Protected in God’s name means being connected, connected to Christ, connected by “believing,” Jesus says. Faith constitutes the protector-connector. **WHO** your heart listens to determines **WHOSE** you are. It’s that simple.

### **A New Prognosis to cross out D-1:**

“Sanctified in the truth” and “sent into the world” How might it look during the next 167 hours coming up this week? Sanctified does not mean “holier than thou.” Root meaning of the Biblical term is “different.” Owned by Christ and the “truth of God” you **ARE** different—not just different from “them,” but different from the “who” we were before the ownership transfer. That means “different” out there in the same old world where we regularly live. Even different from what we were this past week. Even more, “sent” by Christ into that world. That means we’re on assignment with an agenda, Christ’s agenda. Getting folks who are hooked by deadly owners, getting them reconnected to the Owner who offers the life that lasts.

Hamlet had it half-right. “To be or not to be” is half of the question. The other half is what it takes “to be.” The Gospel claims that “to be” is to have the life that lasts. All other options are “not to be.” Jesus claims to offer the life that lasts. We trust him for it—not just this hour here in church, but out in the world—all week long.

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# Missiology in the Orthodox Seminary in Albania

Dear Folks,

After our trip to South Africa and the missiology conference in January, I joined an e-mail list called "family missiology". This report about Christianity in Albania grabbed my attention and we got permission to include it as a THTH.

Enjoy,  
Robin

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## Missiology in the Orthodox Seminary in Albania

After just over a week in Albania, I thought I might write something about my impressions of my first visit. One week is not enough to get to know a country, and so some of the things I say here will no doubt be revised after I have been here longer.

I was invited to teach missiology in the Orthodox Seminary in Albania for a term, and arrived here with my wife Val on Sunday 7 May 2000. We travelled on the plane from Athens with Fr Luke Veronis, the principal of the seminary. Fr Luke had been to Athens to attend the "Orthodoxy 2000" conference, which was arranged by the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece. He read a paper on "Missionary problems in the Orthodox Church at the end of the 20th century". We listened to some of the other papers, as there were several others of missiological interest. There was translation in English, French, Greek and Russian, as papers

were read in all those languages.

I began teaching at the seminary on Monday 8 May. The seminary is at Shen Vlash, about 40 km from Tirana near the port of Durres on the Adriatic Sea. There had been a church and monastery there before, but they were demolished by the Hoxha (pronounced Hodja) regime about 30 years ago. In 1967 Albania was declared to be an atheist state, and all temples, mosques and other religious buildings were closed. Some were converted to other uses, and many were demolished altogether. Shen Vlash (Saint Vlash) was regarded as a holy place by Orthodox, Roman Catholics and Muslims, the three main religious groups in Albania, and so the communist youth of Durres had travelled out there to break down the buildings in 1967.

In 1991 democracy came to Albania, and religious freedom was restored. No Orthodox bishops had survived the Hoxha regime, and most of the few surviving priests had been in prison. Bishop Anastasios Yannoulatos was appointed Archbishop to revive the Orthodox Church of Albania, and he decided to build the seminary at Shen Vlash to symbolise that revival. The seminary now has about 60 students doing a three-year course, with about 20 students in each year. About two-thirds of the students are male, and one-third female. I am teaching the same course to all three years, with the aid of Joana Malaj, who translates everything into Albanian. The students all learn a foreign language, either Greek or English, since there are few theological books available in Albanian, but most, and especially the first years, do not know enough English to follow lectures.

For the first couple of classes, I asked the students to teach me, and to tell me a little about themselves and their churches. In some ways it seemed a bit silly for me to go from South Africa to Albania to teach mission and missiology. If mission is

happening anywhere in the Orthodox Church, it is happening in Albania, and the students can probably teach me more than I can teach them. It was also important to have a better idea of the context of the students ministry. So the students told their stories.

Many of the stories were very similar. There was a church, or two or three or four churches in their village. The communists demolished them in 1967. One of them has been rebuilt, or is being rebuilt. Some went further back, and said that people in the village knew of sites of churches that had been demolished much earlier – by the Turks in the 15th or 16th centuries. Students from Durres told me of the tomb of St Asti, the first Albanian bishop, and the second bishop of Durres (the first had been Jewish). St Asti had been martyred in AD 98. For a South African, the Church in Albania seems mind-bogglingly old, and in its 2000-year history the periods of persecution have been far longer than the entire existence of Christianity in South Africa.

Some of the students had little experience of the persecution at first hand. Many of them were only 10-12 years old when the communist regime fell in 1991. But some said they now understood some things they did not understand back then. Joana Malaj, the translator, said she sometimes thought that her grandmother was talking to herself. When she asked what she was saying, her grandmother would say that it was nothing. Now she knows her grandmother was praying. But to tell children this would have been too dangerous, because they were frequently asked about such things at school, and could innocently say something that would betray the family. Teachers would ask children if they ate a lot of eggs. It may perhaps seem very difficult for Western Christians to understand the extent to which apparently peripheral things like Easter eggs could be a vital symbol of faith, and of a refusal to deny Christ, but in Albania that was



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The communists demanded that all priests shave their beards, and forcibly shaved (or jailed or killed) many of those who did not. In one village, where people knew each other and were often old friends, the priest was faced with a demand to shave his beard. His friend, who was the village leader, allowed him to retain his beard, but in order to do so, he had to remain inside his house, in voluntary house arrest, for over 20 years. For that priest, that was his witness, his refusal to deny Christ. In the West, many Orthodox priests shave their beards, and assimilate to the dominant culture, and think nothing of it. It seems a casual matter, that means nothing. Yet in Albania, between 1967 and 1991, such things could be matters of life or death.

On Tuesday 8 May I spoke to students at the University of Tirana, where Fr Luke is the student chaplain. The locks had been changed on the room where we were to meet, and no one had a key, so we sat on the grass outside the student residences, surrounded by grazing cows and sheep. There were about 20 students, and I spoke about South Africa, and our struggle for democracy, and some of the similarities and differences between South Africa and Albania. One major difference, of course, was that in Albania Christians were persecuted in the name of Atheism, whereas in South Africa Christians were persecuted in the name of "Christian civilisation". Trying to explain that to students in Albania made me aware just how crazy the South African setup was. Persecuting Christians in the name of atheism may be evil and wicked and cruel, but there is at least some logic in it.

An even more significant difference was that in South Africa we have the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Much has been said and written in South Africa about the shortcomings of the TRC – that it let too many people off too lightly, that it has failed

to deal with the question of restitution, or, from the other side of the political fence, that it was a witch hunt, or an example of the winners rewriting history. In the Balkans, and especially in Albania, such criticisms seem trivial and petty. I think that the contrast made more of an impact on foreign missionaries, who have experience of life outside Albania. For the Albanian students themselves, it was perhaps inconceivable, something from another universe, another dimension. It struck me that if the Balkans had an institution half, or even a tenth as effective as the TRC, the situation would be enormously better than it is now.

Val and I met Archbishop Anastasios briefly in the cathedral at a baptism last Thursday. "Welcome to Africa in Europe", he said.

But Africa in Europe is hardly the word for it. Perhaps Mocambique after the floods might be comparable, or the Democratic Republic of Congo in the throes of civil war. The poverty, dirt and squalor of Tirana, the capital city, are hard to believe. Yes, there are places in South Africa that compare with it, but they are isolated, and in a way exceptional. Places like Kwaggafontein in KwaNdebele were perhaps as half bad as Tirana in the mid-1980s – they are much better now. Such settlements in South Africa are going from bad to better. In Tirana, they are going from bad to worse.

In 1991 three things came to Albania. Religious freedom, democracy, and capitalism. I am no doubt prejudiced; as a Christian and a liberal, I believe that religious freedom and democracy are good things. But in Albania capitalism has been an unmitigated disaster, with no redeeming features whatever.

Under its socialist economic system, Albania achieved autarky. The government was cruel and oppressive, but the towns were clean, and children could grow up healthy and safe. In South

Africa, under apartheid, the combination of sanctions and the desire of the National Party government to ward off undesirable foreign influences achieved a certain amount of isolation. The end of isolation has brought something of an economic boom. In Albania the end of isolation led to mass impoverishment and underdevelopment.

Albania under Hoxha managed to achieve almost complete isolation and economic self-sufficiency. The countryside is littered with mushroom-shaped concrete bunkers that make Magnus Malan's war psychosis of the "total onslaught" era seem comparatively sane. Albania isolated itself even from other communist countries. It broke with Yugoslavia when Tito abandoned Stalinism. It broke with the USSR in the 1960s, and for a long time its only friend was China. But by 1978 even China was too liberal, and Albania stood alone.

In 1991 when communism fell, so did the Albanian economy. Industrial production fell by more than 60%, as people destroyed factories, smashed greenhouses, and chopped down orchards in an almost suicidal orgy of destruction. Now almost all food has to be imported, and Albania doesn't produce enough to have a balance of trade. The dirt and squalor and pollution have come in the last 8 years. Jerry-built flats have gone up all over Tirana. Almost half the buildings look unfinished, and even before they are finished, they look like dilapidated ruins. Most South African "informal settlements" are much better. A canal running through the middle of Tirana was a grassy and pleasant place 10 years ago. Now it is choked with rubbish, smells of raw sewage, and the once grassy banks are all over spaza shops. The parks have vanished, taken over by illegal structures and piles of rubbish, built with bricks that are often stolen from public buildings, which have just enough bricks left in the walls not to collapse entirely. The culture of non-payment is alive and well.

Travelling from Tirana to the seminary near Durres takes about an hour. This is probably the main trunk road in the country, and its surface is broken up. Travelling at 40 km an hour is a breakneck speed. And all the way along one passes derelict abandoned factories, and derelict abandoned vehicles, which litter the side of the road and the streams and rivers.

In 1991 Albania wooed capitalism, and the result has been very ugly indeed. In 1997 there was a financial collapse, and many Albanians fled as economic refugees to other countries. Criminals were let out of jail, or escaped in the general breakdown of law and order, and they too went to other countries, where they gave all Albanians a bad reputation. At the time of the fall of communism, Albanian refugees and immigrants were welcomed. Since 1997, however, they are treated with suspicion, and there is growing xenophobia and racism.

So it's three cheers for religious freedom, two cheers for democracy, and a big boo for capitalism.

Keep well,  
Steve Hayes

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## **Mission Theology Begins with a Sad Message**

Today's Thursday theologian is Agne Nordlander, my colleague a few years ago at the Mekane Yesus Seminary in Addis Ababa. Agne's a missionary from the Swedish Evangelical Mission [SEM], a Lutheran agency for mission both within Sweden and

overseas. Founded in 1856, the SEM started mission work in Ethiopia 1866 and is one of founders of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus. Before coming to Ethiopia 6 years ago Agne served for 21 years as principal of Johannelunds Theological Institute for training pastors and missionaries in Uppsala, Sweden. For his Doctor of Theology degree he wrote a dissertation on the theological anthropology of Helmut Thielicke. Thielicke happens to be my own "Doktorvater." So Agne and I were not total strangers when first we met. Our friendship and theological appreciation of each other has grown. As you read his words, you'll understand why. His article originally appeared in Swedish in the "SEM Messenger" earlier this year.

Peace & Joy!

Ed

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## **Mission Theology Begins with a Sad Message**

At the meeting of the EFS workers in Umeae in 1998 Soeren Ekstroem expressed the hope that the EFS could help those responsible at the Church House in Uppsala to answer the question: "What is mission?"

Every new generation must devote itself to the biblical answer to that question. No one has answered it better than Paul in his Epistle to the Romans. According to Paul, mission means going out with a sad message and a glad message, or, to use Luther's terminology, to preach law and gospel.

The sad message means, to use medical terms, a diagnosis of the human being's sickness; the glad message offers medicine which can heal and cure. [Ed's comment: Crossings' favorite word for this is "Pro-gnosis," which in the N.T. does indicate a "GLAD message."]

So what is wrong with the human being according to Paul?

First, her behavior is twisted and distorted. She misses the goal and commits sinful deeds. Second, her attitudes are destructive and anti-socially egoistic. Third, the human being has turned away from Life's source and cause. And God reacts with wrath and judgment, to use the biblical terms. This, God's reaction, is the biggest problem for the human being, worse than her bad behavior and mentality.

To be evil, destructive and egoistic is bad. To have God, Life itself, against one is even worse. Then the course is short and completely hopeless.

What then can solve my three-fold problem?

Behavior therapy can, in a small way, change my behavior. We don't need to draw God into that. Psychodynamic therapy can, in a small way, change my attitudes and my way of thinking. We can keep God and the biblical word outside of this process.

But how do we solve the problem of God-against-us?

Here is where the glad message comes in. It is here where the message of a crucified and risen Savior and Redeemer becomes relevant and necessary.

The glad message doesn't consist primarily of Jesus Christ as a good example who teaches us to live rightly. It doesn't consist primarily of the fact that Jesus Christ can change our negative attitudes. It consists of the fact that [through Jesus' cross and resurrection] God's judgment and wrath over my twisted and misdirected life have been taken away, and that I find access to God's grace, love, and forgiveness, to God's fellowship, life, and light.

Words are not enough, whether they be the biblical or the

modern, to express God's overwhelming message of gladness. When I fix my trust in the glad message, it changes my thinking and attitudes, better and more deeply than any other religion, ideology, or psychology. It leads also to a different life-style and behavior.

The four evangelists express the sad and glad messages in a somewhat different way from that of Paul, but it is always the combination of the sad and glad message that is the focal point for rescue, freedom, and rehabilitation.

Mission can be compared to raising a tent. The sad and glad messages make up the two bearing poles. Then there come the smaller stakes: education, care of the sick, emergency help, water, agricultural and forest projects, changes in attitudes relating to politics, attitudes toward women, leadership, and sexuality.

The biblical view of mission is holistic. The Gospel has to do with the whole person. The order in which the tent-stakes are raised can vary, depending on country, culture and conditions. But there can never be a New Testament Christian church without the two bearing tent poles, the sad message and the glad message.

Our biggest weakness today is that we are not willing to present the biblical diagnosis of human sickness. We don't want to present the sad message, because we are ashamed of it, of we don't really believe it any more. That is a mortal sickness in today's mission theology. We pride ourselves instead in having dispensed with the dark view of the human condition in favor of one that is bright and optimistic. The seriousness of eternity is accordingly disappearing. When did you last weep over the fact that people can be eternally lost?

Where today is that type of Christian who, like the Good

Shepherd, goes out and seeks for the lost sheep? Aren't we Christian preachers becoming like a doctor who thinks that there are only headaches, for which an aspirin is enough? I know for a fact that there are no doctors like that, but I am afraid that there are all too many such pastors and missionaries today. That is why a conscious theology of mission must begin with the sad message and its serious content.

Agne Nordlander

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## **The Order of Philippi – A Crossings Spin-off**

Colleagues,

It's the Feast of Our Lord's Ascension today. And that festival always revives this memory. When I was a seminarian half a century ago, our homiletics prof, Richard Caemmerer, gave us novices a straight and simple answer when someone asked: Why did Jesus go away? "So he might be equally close to all of us," he said. Hmmm. That's worth thinking about. I'll probably mention it this coming Sunday when I'm guest preacher for our own congregation here in town.

But then we had other profs too—some more eccentric than others. The one at the top of every student's eccentricity-chart was affectionately known simply by his first two initials: "J.T." Goldie oldies still quote J.T. aphorisms. Since no seminarian in those days was allowed to be married—yes, so it was!—J.T. also gave us advice on the weighty doctrines of courtship and marriage. Here's one such: "It's a sin to marry for money, gentlemen. The secret is to go where the money is, and then marry for love."



That's a segue to the serious stuff below. Its author is Richard Lyon from Alton, Illinois. Richard's been our family dentist for years—even though it's a 50-mile round trip north across both the Missouri and Mississippi rivers to get from our place to his. Not surprising Richard and spouse Dorothy live in Fairmount, the high-rent district of Alton—where the money is. In the last decade or so he's been at work turning that “burden” into a calling, “The Order of Philippi.” Along the way he got a seminary degree from Seminex, despite his lifelong Presbyterian connections. He then pushed on for ordination as an ELCA pastor. Next July 4, God willing, he'll turn 76. Yes, one of these days he may think of retirement from one or the other of these major vocations.

In the meantime he dabbles in Crossings kinds of ventures. Described below is one he pursues with folks who live where the money is. The text is Richard's own rhetoric. I didn't edit it at all. With him, what you see is what you get.

Peace & Joy!

Ed

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## **ABOUT THE ORDER OF PHILIPPI**

About fifteen years ago some selected friends and I founded a religious order called The Order of Philippi. The purpose was, and is, to minister among serious Christian laypersons who have special gifts of wealth and influence, but also to clergy who may lead them. (1 Cor. 4) Though these lay Christians may have unique access to the world, they are often overlooked or taken for granted by the church.

The name was chosen in regard for the apostle Paul's most faithful supporters, financially and spiritually, the Philippians. The rule for the Order is to focus, bi-focally, on God's Law and Gospel, to be able to articulate that double accent in our talk and especially to act it out in our daily

callings. At first that may sound self-evident, until one realizes what a unique skill is involved here. The early church called it the “secret discipline” or, perhaps more accurately, “the discipline of The Secret,” The Secret being the mysterious Gospel.

The trick is, how to “out-world” the world at its own business, which is the divine Law, but to do so not because we’ve “got to” but because we “get to”. Only the Gospel of Christ brings that kind of freedom. Even the anti-Christian Voltaire knew about excelling in the world. “Study and prepare yourself,” he said, “so that while the rest are common thieves, you will be an embezzler.” But that sort of cynicism is not what our Lord meant by being “wise as serpents.” Our Lord was talking about the wisdom of the Cross, his Cross. To the world that does not look like wisdom at all. But it is. Astonishingly so.

The classic rule for religious orders included vows of obedience, chastity and poverty. We accept obedience as key, if that means what Paul called “the obedience” of faith. (The Latin-rooted word, “obedience” means “audiencing/listening toward” something. Because God’s Law and God’s gospel are two quite different words coming from God, audiencing toward one will not be the same as audiencing toward the other. Faith is the appropriate way to “audience” a promise, any promise. Hard work is the appropriate way to “audience” toward a word that says, “Do this.” Paul uses the same word, obedience, for the proper response to God’s Law and to God’s Gospel. But since the two words from God are quite different from each other, the proper audiencing toward each of them will be different too.)

So central is faith that that in turn determines what we do with chastity and poverty, two of our culture’s sorest pressure points. (More on that in a moment.)

First, faith. Typically, our seminars follow this agenda. Prior to Christ the King Sunday we meet for two days in a relaxed, resort-type venue. The assigned readings are the appointed gospel lessons for Advent, soon to follow in the new church-year. Our lead theologian, The Reverend Dr. Robert Bertram, presents an opening paper on the seminar theme and is the “provocateur” as the seminarists (lay and clergy) respond by unpacking the deepest meaning of the assigned scriptural texts, followed by critique from the group. A few months later, in Epiphany or pre-Lent, we come together again for a similar seminar, this time in preparation for Easter and Pentecost.

Underlying our biblical-theological discussions are always these down-to-earth, practical questions for our own self-examination: What do you do? What do you get for what you do? What do you do with what you get? Where does it get you? Or we’ve put the same idea in other words: “Making love, making money – how to make them right with the Maker of heaven and earth.” Re-enter, now, the issues of chastity and poverty, referred to earlier. These two areas, particularly in our world today, need the exceptional help of God’s Christ as he makes us right by faith in his mercy. Together we “Philippians” struggle with new ways to make “Crossings” from his Cross onto our own crosses in the everyday world, also of sex and money. The Secret gets as earthy as that.

As a special project The Order of Philippi supports the Lazarus Project, which in turn supports the Village of Hope in Haiti with work teams and funds. The Order’s responsibility is in the area of healing. That we do by bringing clean water, waste management, better nutrition, hygiene, and teaching. A medical/dental clinic is developing.

In, with and under all this theological work there is plenty of time for creative dining, partying and fun-filled collegiality at interesting venues. Recall, one of the theme words in Paul’s

Letter to the Philippians is “joy.”

Richard L. Lyon

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## Two Theology Classes in St. Louis

Colleagues,

Lighter fare, this time. Well, maybe.

This Thursday evening's class session will be the final one for Robin and me in a 7-week course sponsored by the Lutheran School of Theology in St. Louis [LST in STL] for the Easter Term 2000. The course is titled: “Encountering the Last Enemy.” I put together the format which is appended below.

LST in STL, only a few years old, is a relative of Crossings. Here's how. For the decade 1983-93 Crossings offered semester-long courses in the St. Louis area, usually three each term, with credit-connections to Webster University here in town. Bob Bertram and I did all the teaching at that time. I was in town as chief honcho for the Crossings' daily operations, though out of town every other weekend for a Crossings workshop somewhere in North America. Bob during those years was a commuter to Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago from Monday to Thursday, but always back home in St. Louis for his Saturday morning Crossings class.

When I retired as Crossings exec and moved over to Global Missions volunteering for the ELCA, the semester-long classes stopped. But they soon re-appeared in a new format when Bob retired from LSTC and became a regular presence on the St. Louis scene. Through his initiative theology classes resurfaced under a broader umbrella, LST-STL, “An Educational Ministry of the Metro St. Louis Area Coalition – ELCA .” LST-

STL offers three courses per academic quarter (one each “for personal discovery, for practical ministry, for professional growth”). It also arranges ecumenical encounters with Christians from other heritages, especially those with whom the ELCA has official connections. Bob and I still do some teaching, but we’re now part of a faculty of a dozen or more. Historically, though not juridically, the Crossings connection persists. Crossings patriarch Bob was the first LST dean. Michael Hoy, the current dean, left his post as Crossings President to take on the LST-STL job. You can guess what sort of theology is at the heart of LST-STL.

That may well be more than you really wanted to know. What follows is the outline for “Encountering the last Enemy,” the course concluding this evening, and the outline for the one I’m slotted to do in the LST Summer Session, “Why Jesus?”

Peace & Joy!

Ed

**Footnote:** *Saturday June 24 in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Crossings board of directors the full day will be devoted to “show and tell.” The design of the event is to show how Crossings style theology gets done. Goldie-oldies Bob and Ed, as well as the takeover generation in the Crossings community, will be on hand for the program. All are welcome to join in the event. If interested contact Crossings office manager, Cathy Lessmann, at 314-576-0567 or email at [info@crossings.org](mailto:info@crossings.org)*

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**Lutheran School of Theology – St. Louis MO**  
**Easter Term 2000**  
**COURSE TITLE: Encountering the Last Enemy**  
**Instructor: Edward H. Schroeder**

**Venue: Living Christ Lutheran Church, 2725 Concord Drive, Florissant, MO**  
**Thursday Evenings – 7:00 to 9:30 p.m.**

Course description: An examination of the clinical realities of death and dying, and the added dimension that comes to this “fact of life” when the Good News of Christ’s resurrection becomes our resource for coping with death.

**SESSION 1. April 6**

The clinical realities of death and dying: How people die today in America

Guest Presenter: Dr. Valerie Yancey, Project Director for “Improving End-of-Life Care,” Medical Intensive Care Unit (Barnes Hospital)

**SESSION 2. April 13**

Just what/who is this last enemy? The depth dimension of mortality in Christian theological analysis

Readings:

1. Luther’s sermon on Psalm 90 (Selections)
2. E.H. Schroeder: “Encountering the Last Enemy”
3. R.W. Bertram: “Pardon my Dying”

NO CLASS MAUNDY THURSDAY, APRIL 20

**SESSION 3. April 27**

Jesus’ Easter and Resurrection theology as resource for coping with death

Readings:

1. R.W. Bertram essay: “The Lively Use of the Risen Lord”
2. John Updike’s poem: “Seven Stanzas at Easter”
3. Kathleen O. Reed’s poem: “The Eggtooth”
4. Luther’s Easter sermons, esp. on I Cor. 15

**SESSION 4. May 4**

Death under the X-ray of other religious cultures—  
Sample: Cremation theology and practice in Balinese Hinduism.  
What can Christians learn from this?  
Marie and Ed Schroeder “show and tell” from their 3 months  
last year in Bali  
[If time allows, a look at other theologies of death:  
Judaism, Buddhism, Islam, Deepak Chopra]  
Readings:  
Schroeders’ “Letters from Bali” 1999

### **SESSION 5. May 11**

The denial—and glorification—of death in American culture  
Tracking death in American movies and music. (Guest  
presenters)  
Readings:

1. Selections from Ernst Becker’s classic, “Denial of Death”
2. Miller’s “Psychologies of death (e.g., Kuebler-Ross) the  
new American NORM for dying”
3. Beth Baker & Karen Reyes’ essay: “R.I.P OFF – Death as Big  
Business. Who can you Trust?”
4. Samples from American pop culture

### **SESSION 6. May 18**

Inserting the Easter Good News into American culture.  
Christian ritual, Christian communal responses to the “other  
gospel” of American culture.  
The funeral liturgy in the Lutheran Book of Worship, Easter  
hymns in LBW. J.S. Bach (B-Minor Mass & St. John Passion)  
Readings:

1. Rick Mueller’s sermon: “Immortality of the soul or  
resurrection of the body?”
2. James van Tholen’s sermon: “Surprised by death.”
3. Students supply additional samples from their  
experience—good and bad

## **SESSION 7. May 25**

Final session: Christian art—painting and sculpture, poetry—using Easter to subdue the last enemy.

Samples: Catacomb art, Gruenewald, Duerer, Rembrandt, Siegfried Reinhardt, Dylan Thomas, Elizabeth Layton, Valerie Yancey's "Photo story of Jim's death." If possible, guest Fr. Terry Dempsey, director of the Museum of Contemporary Religious Art here in St. Louis

Assignment: Students write their own obituaries for class presentation and discussion.

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## **LST – SUMMER SCHOOL 2000**

### **COURSE TITLE: WHY JESUS?**

Course Description: Why not New Age? Or Moses? Or Muhammad? Or do-it-yourself religion? Today's world is "awash in a sea of faiths." So where does Jesus fit in amidst all those options? Christians claim that Good News, something "good" and something "new," came into our world in Jesus. Is that still true? For five evenings in July we'll check it out.

## **SESSION ONE**

Why Jesus?

The answer given to that question in the NT documents vis-a-vis Judaism and Hellenistic Religions. What was "good and new" compared with these 2 options? What is "good and new" correlates with how "bad and old" the human dilemma is that calls for healing. Checking out the "good news/bad news" paradigms in 3 New Testament theologies: Luke, John and Paul.

Reading –

NEWSWEEK, March 27, 2000 issue. Cover Story: "Visions of Jesus. How Jews, Muslims and Buddhists View Him."

## **SESSION TWO**

Why Jesus vis-a-vis New Age religion?

Checking NA religion for its diagnosis of humankind and



prognosis of Good News Comparing that with one NT paradigm for bad news/good news

Reading –

Schroeder's essay: Answering the Why Jesus Question in Today's Pluralist World

### **SESSION THREE**

Why Jesus vis-a-vis other religions of The Book: Judaism and Islam? Checking Judaism and Islam for their diagnoses and prognoses Comparing that with another NT paradigm for bad news/good news

Reading –

Schroeder's essay: Martin Luther's Theology of World Religions

### **SESSION FOUR**

Why Jesus vis-a-vis the Indian religions of Hinduism and Buddhism? Checking Hinduism and Buddhism for their diagnoses and prognoses Comparing that with another NT paradigm for bad news/good news

Readings –

1. M & E Schroeder: Letters from Bali 1999

2. Kosuke Koyama's essay: "It's the Buddhist, not Buddhism"

### **SESSION FIVE**

Strategies for Christian witness in today's world "awash in a sea of faiths."

Readings –

1. Report from the Jan. 2000 conference of the Intl Assn for Mission Studies. Theme: "Jesus Christ Crucified and Living in Today's Broken World"

2. Selections from R R Caemmerer The Church in the World

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# Dysfunctional Authority—in Families and in Churches

Colleagues,

Today's posting comes from the hand of Jeffrey Anderson. Jeff was a senior student at Concordia Seminary (St. Louis) during the first year I taught there in '71-'72. We've stayed in touch over the years. He and wife Judith carry out their callings—do their Crossings—in the secular workplace. Jeff's a computer system engineer and Judith teaches multiply handicapped children. They live in Ohio.

Peace & Joy!

Ed

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Dear Ed,

A few weeks ago I read your review of Mary Todd's book about Authority in the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod [ThTh 93. March 23, 2000]. This topic is near to my heart. It is not just near to my heart because I have lived my life in the environs of the LCMS, but because it is an issue that I live with daily in the inner dialogue of my soul. I have internalized the LCMS style of "authority" (some might suggest that I was born with it), and it is at war with the voice of "freedom" that I first heard in my baptism.

I have long held that the LCMS displays the classic symptoms of a dysfunctional family. So I was fascinated to hear you use the metaphor of "the elephant in the living room", which is part of the lingo of contemporary recovery psychology. I have not read

Mary's book, so I don't know whether she used the elephant imagery, or whether the elephant is your embellishment. But that does not matter. The elephant metaphor led me to do some thinking about how a theology of the cross might apply Diagnosis and Prognosis to the authority issue in the LCMS using some of the language of contemporary recovery psychology. I thought you might enjoy my ruminations.

First of all, when we talk about the authority issue, we are dealing with two groups: the authorities and the obey-ers, the dominators and the dominated; or in "recovery" language, the abuser and the abused. A theology of glory might step into the fray to diagnose and fix one side or the other, either the abused or the abuser. "Recovery psychology" would call that triangulation. A theology of the cross would call that self-justification, since it would be the other guys that I would choose to diagnose. So, it seems we must do our Diagnosis and Prognosis twice. I did the section on the Authority figures; the "vested" males, in some detail. The notes on the victims, the minorities, the women, the excommunicated, the plain folk in the pews who have accepted the domination of the vested authorities, need further development.

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## **THE VESTED AUTHORITIES:** **[Using the Crossings paradigm]**

### **DIAGNOSIS**

**Step 1.** Of course, authority is necessary, even good. Some authorities are "ordained by God". So where does authority go wrong? That is easy. Authority has gone askew when it is no longer exercised "for the good of the governed," but for the benefit of the authorities themselves. It happens all the time.

We have a saying: "Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." Therefore we are not surprised to see government scandals in the news every day. People in power use the power for themselves. It is such a common institutional booby trap that Jesus warns his followers against it: Do not lord it over one another like the gentiles do. In my youth we [LCMS] Lutherans said things like: do not elevate human authority to divine status like the pope and the catholics do. Abuse of authority was present at the birth of the LCMS in Martin Stephan, and emerged "naturally" in the cult of "Herr Pastor", which used the German Bible's appellation for Yahweh and the Lord Jesus to address the pastors of the synod. So, at first glance, we could say that the problem is that God-given authority is being abused in the LCMS. Perhaps we need some way to check the pride and arrogance of human leaders, some higher authority to keep them in line. Well, that would be nice, but the problem in a dysfunctional family is worse than that.

**Step 2.** Studies now show that fathers and mothers who abuse their children are acting out their own sense of powerlessness. They are themselves often abused children. When their children do anything outside a narrow, rigid range of acceptable behavior, it triggers their rage. And to regain a sense of inner control, they must beat their children into conformity, even if it kills the child. In theological terms we would say, they cannot see the Christ in their children, because they cannot see the Christ in themselves. They have not experienced the healing acceptance of Jesus for their own human imperfections. Such abusers of power may talk about Christ. They may even teach and preach about Christ. But they do not "have Christ" [Note: "habere Christum" was one of Luther's favorite definitions for faith. He got it from the Gospel of John.] When authority gets controlling or manipulative or cruel, it is a Christ-less authority.

**Step 3.** The tools of an abusive authority do not have to be physical beatings or gas chambers. The tools can be words that engender guilt in their victims. It can be a look that speaks shame toward their object. It can be highly rational arguments that show the “authority” to be righteous, and the other party to be wrong. It can be convention resolutions that define outlawed teachings or forbidden books. It can be a systematic theology that shows one race to be inferior, or one gender to be subservient. It can be an educational or worship environment that speaks and acts out the unworthiness of the sinner in the pew. But all of these techniques are merely a smoke screen. They are a distraction, like the accusatory raging of an alcoholic who points out everyone else’s faults. They are like the words of our parents in the primal garden: Don’t look at me, God. It was his fault. It was her fault. It is the behavior of one who is hiding in terror from the accusing authority of God.

## PROGNOSIS

**Step 4.** What we see in contemporary therapy for dysfunctional families, where authority has turned abusive, is that some kind of outside intervention is necessary. How salient that God’s intervention for an authority system gone amuck is to offer a new kind of authority. A Lord in a manger. An authority who is addressed as “my Lord and my God” because he has holes in his hands from hanging on the cross. “Authority” is the rightful claim that an “author” has over her work, as its creator. And this “Herr Jesu”, the Word, who created the world, now is “the author(ity) and finisher of your faith”. He gives authorities an alternative to trusting in their own control over their underlings or their organization. Rather than holding down others to prove their own manliness or their own righteousness, they can now hold on to the authoritative words of Jesus who died at the hands of the authorities and still declared, “Father forgive them.” Yes, forgive the authorities.

**Step 5.** A person who comes from a dysfunctional family (most of us?) is never “recovered” but always “recovering”. This implies a process of ongoing healing for a wounded soul. If abusers of authority are known to be abused children themselves, then it is plain to see that they need to be re-parented by a nurturing parent. Or to use the imagery which is so common in Scripture, they need a nurturing shepherd (which is what the Latin term “pastor” means). The Lord Jesus is just such a good shepherd. He leads and feeds his sheep, especially the lost and wounded ones. He calls them by name. He nourishes them with his own body and blood, almost like a mother nourishes her babe with her own milk. We see how necessary such divine nurturance is when we realize that many of the “vested authorities,” the LCMS clergy, were mere children when they were wrested away from their homes to go to “prep schools,” where hazing was the abusive authority structure in which they prepared for ministerial authority. [Note: for over 100 years the “pipeline” through which most LCMS pastors entered the ministry was a system of seven boarding schools around the country which students entered at age 14 for six years of education before entering the seminary.] So the healing needs to proceed day by day, one day at a time, under the watchful eye and the gentle hand of the good shepherd.

**Step 6.** Could it be any better than that? Yes, it could be. Yes, it is! It is the Good Shepherd himself who chooses formerly abused sheep, and commissions them to be authorities in his church: Feed my sheep. Feed my lambs. Feed my sheep. Peter got flashbacks of his own flawed discipleship when he heard those words. But three times he is invited to be a shepherd of his Lord’s flock. He experiences what it means for his old authoritative words, “I do not know the man,” to be completely erased, and replaced with the new authority to tend the master’s sheep. The New Testament word for this transformation of authority is freedom. The authority-bound, power-hungry,

control-centered leader is now free to serve the sheep in his charge. As Luther says: A perfectly free Lord of all, subject to none. And at the same time a perfectly obedient slave of all, subject to all. Just think, shepherds with the authority to die for the sheep, and not the other way around.

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## THE VICTIMS OF ABUSIVE AUTHORITY

Here are some diagnostic clues that may point to a salutary prognosis for the victims.

### DIAGNOSIS

**Step 1.** Controlled. Manipulated by authorities. Powerless. Led like sheep to the slaughter.

**Step 2.** They come to believe themselves worthless. They trust the negative evaluation of their dysfunctional Herr Pastor rather than the promise of their Herr Jesu, the Good Pastor who said in baptism, You are my own dear child! The abused sheep abandon responsibility for their own faith and life, and submit to whatever the authority figures say. Live like robots, not as children of the Father. They would rather put up with abusive authority, than rock the boat. They view their abused condition as a way to bear the cross of Christ. They admire their abusers.

**Step 3.** They have chosen the victim mode. They experience the wrath of God, not as fire but as a life of religious rote and obedient ritual. They have chosen false authorities, false gods. They live in a hellish stupor and hardly know it is the wrath of God.

## PROGNOSIS

**Step 4.** Intervention for these victims of pastoral authority comes in the form of a brother who stands up to the scribes and pharisees and authorities. He heals the lame, instead of praying for the lame to bear their burden patiently. He identifies with prostitutes and acts out the worth of the sinner, while she is still a sinner. Instead of leaving the abused with their burden, he shoulders their burden, and dies with it.

**Step 5.** He begins to touch their lives with surprising blessings.

**Step 6.** He becomes the center of a new community of “the recovering”. And this community begins to reach out to other victims of authoritarian abuse.

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## Christological Difficulties at IAMS 10 – Part II

Colleagues,

Exactly two years ago this very week (it was May 13) Thursday Theology #1 went out into cyberspace. So today's ThTh 100 is a bit special—if for no other reason than that we've been blessed to get this far—and also blessed with over 500 of you now on this listserve. ThTh 100 is special in another way, namely, it's the longest ThTh piece we've ever posted—46K characters (=12 hard copy pages). Today's text represents Part II of my comments on the Christology we encountered at the missiology conference Robin, Marie and I attended earlier this year. That was the Tenth Conference of the International



Association for Mission Studies meeting at the Univ. of Pretoria (Hamanskraal campus) January 21-28, 2000. [Part I of this report was posted as ThTh #94.](#) If 12 pages are just too much, lay them aside, but don't run away. Next week's posting will be shorter.

Peace & Joy!

Ed

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## Part II. CHRISTOLOGY IN THE PLENARY PAPERS AT IAMS X

*[Background: [Part I of this essay \(March 30, 2000\)](#) spoke of the "christological difficulties" we had at IAMS 10. The fundamental difficulty was that we hardly ever talked about Christology at all during our 8-days together. In Part One I concocted some abbreviations that I'll also use here in part Two. I abbreviated the conference theme's two parts as follows: JCCL was short-hand for "Jesus Christ Crucified and Living..." and TBW was "...Today's Broken World." Two more code symbols signalled the double meaning of the key term "reflecting." "Reflect-T" was reflection as thinking. "Reflect-M" was reflecting as in a mirror.]*

I. **A. J. V. CHANDRAKANTHAN "Proclaiming the Crucified Christ in a Broken World: An Asian Perspective"** The printed text of AJVC's paper that I brought home from IAMS 10 does not fully match the notes I took while he was speaking—and that in two significant places.

1. My notes record considerable time devoted to six distinct images in St. Paul's christology. In the printed text that's all condensed to one single sentence.
2. Fully half of the printed text carries the title: "A Broken World: Glimpses of a War Experience." It is

the author's jeremiad on the civil war in Sri Lanka, illustrated with his own first-hand experience of holocaust-like horrors inflicted on the Tamil community there. The data are dreadful. However I don't remember hearing any of that in his plenary presentation. Did it happen or am I having a "senior moment?"

The six Pauline metaphors for Christology that AJVC gave us were powerful, and could have been foundational for plenary work on JCCL. This high Christology is the best resource Christians have for crossing over to the broken world so frightfully reported in the last half of the paper. But that did not happen in the paper, nor in the subsequent discussion we had. Yet these christology items are too good to go to waste. So I'll try my own hand at making some linkages below.

In a private conversation afterwards, reported by Fritz Frei, Chandrakanthan offered this summary:

- A. Jesus Christ, crucified and living in our world via Word, sacrament and in reality, is for Paul the content of life and proclamation. Despite the scandalous humiliation associated with this mode of death Paul sees Jesus' crucifixion as the historical source of God's redemptive intervention. The apostle strives relentlessly to mediate this mystery by taking every facet of daily life he can imagine and using it for this purpose. From cultic life he presents the cross as expiation; from economics it is God's new covenant (new contract for exchange of goods and services); from political life it's ransom; from daily street life it's Shalom, God's new greeting of peace to people; from the courtroom it's righteousness and justification; from the realm

of personal relations it's reconciliation. In this way Paul portrays this action of God as inexpressible, yet genuine rescue, linked then with the invitation to proclaim this "good news" to the ends of the earth.

- B. In the context of the socio-religious and political spectrum of Asia this crucified brokenness of God is evident among his people and in the current realities of every stratum of daily life. Frightful is the brokenness manifest in the never-ending conflict between Singhalese and Tamils in Sri Lanka. Over 60,000 Tamilian civilians, mostly women and children, have died in the mayhem. And all the while the official church keeps its distance, observing this unending crucifixion in much the same way as the onlookers who stood back and watched the events of Mt. Calvary. Sri Lanka symbolizes Asia's brokenness in most brutal fashion. Only a genuine church of the poor and powerless, the weak and the bleeding, will have the courage to take up this daily cross, to carry the sign of the cross and point prophetically to a hopeful future in the power of God and the Spirit of Christ. The church is called to identify the sins of the world, for which the poor carry the burden. The God of the Bible is on their side. The church is commissioned to discover her calling as community in Christ by constantly seeking reconciliation between the powers that divide. In taking her place at the side of the poor and helpless, the church makes God's constant and concrete presence visible and palpable in their midst. The mission of the Asiatic church is rooted here. Here is the place to be disciples of Christ.

**Comment:**

where and how does Chandrakanthan connect paragraphs A and B? Para A is solid JCCL. Para B is grim TBW. But do the twain meet other than in the fact of crucifixion in each one? Not really. There's not much good news in noting that Jesus was crucified and, sure enough, Tamilians are being crucified too. But Paul's high Christology of the crucified Lord and the myriad Tamil crosses could be crossed theologically with one another, couldn't they? So that the former would be a resource for coping with the latter. Perhaps something like this:

1. In all six of Paul's metaphors for portraying the cross of Christ, the agenda is humankind's "God-problem." Not our problem in believing in God, but our conflict with God. Every one of the metaphors conveys "good news" because it remedies a prior "bad news" situation. Christ's cross is (cultic) expiation because it removes barriers blocking access to God. It is new covenant, God's new personal contract wherein God "remembers our sins no more." It is political in liberating slaves from alien owners into God's own realm of mercy-management. It is Shalom in restoring rectitude in personal relations between God and humans. It is forensic courtroom stuff in that "the accuser has been thrown out" of the divine court since the "blood of the Lamb" has been entered into the record on behalf of the (otherwise rightfully) accused.
2. It is reconciliation, as Paul calls it in II Cor 5, but not to be understood as two parties once at odds now becoming friends again. Instead Paul is using reconciliation as a commercial metaphor [like reconciling your checkbook with the bank's statement], which Luther liked to call the

“froehlicher Wechsel.” Joyful transfer, a fantastic exchange, a sweet swap. It’s all about exchanging assets and liabilities—Christ’s assets for our liabilities. In Christ’s crucifixion our liabilities move to his account with all the consequences which that entails, and Christ’s assets are transferred to us with all the benefits thereunto appertaining. In Paul’s own words: “In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses [i.e., the law’s kind of commerce] against them.” Instead “for our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin [i.e., our liabilities transferred to one who had none such on his own] so that in him we might become the righteousness of God [i.e., Christ’s assets transferred to us (former) sinners].”

3. JCCL solves the God-problem of the human race. In I Cor 3 Paul speaks of it as freedom. “Where the Spirit of the Lord [Christ] is, there is freedom.” (v.17) Christ-trusters, Christ-connected sinners, are free from any god-problem. They now “have confidence toward God through Christ.” [I Cor 3:4] Run this freedom through the metaphors AJVC offered us: Free from barricaded access to God (cultic); from God’s trespass-counting (commercial); from alien owners (political); from accusation before the divine bench (forensic); from other negatives now replaced by God’s mercy-management in relating to us. This God-freedom is new grounding, new rooting to nourish other freedoms. Initially my own internal freedom—in the heart. Call it faith, namely, the confidence that the God-freedom just described is indeed true about me. Consequently I don’t need to keep focusing on my God-connection, but can devote my energies elsewhere, for example, to TBW.

4. Which is what AJVC does. He agonizes that in a country so full of religion as Sri Lanka—Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim and Christian—people committed to these religions have no significant effect on the “apocalypse now” unfolding there. Paul would wonder whether any of the four groups mentioned, Christians included, are free enough to do what AJVC pleads for. Apart from what might be said for the other groups, Christians—if they indeed are the silent observers AJVC portrays—are the ones who have forgotten JCCL. They need to be diagnosed, not first of all for their defective ethics, but for their defective faith. If the fruits are bad, says Jesus, the tree is sick. You don’t tell the tree to bear good fruit. You first have to re-root it, re-root it into JCCL. Faith before ethics. Otherwise you get no Christian ethics at all.
5. In NT language the opposite of faith is fear. Who knows what all the things are that bystander Christians in Sri Lanka fear? From my distance I can only guess: fear of ridicule, fear of criticism, fear of repercussions on family, fear of getting killed myself, fear of doing the wrong thing despite my best intentions, fear of getting in trouble with my own tribal associates, and more. When Christians are under diagnosis of such inaction, the root fear is that JCCL can’t sustain me, won’t sustain me, when I do indeed confront any or all of the above.
6. When fear spreads its tentacles around the heart, freedom dies. And for folks like that, as Paul tells the Galatians, slavery has returned to subvert the “freedom wherewith Christ has set us free.” For such cases, it’s back to square one. The putative Christians need to be evangelized again—at the base,

at their own roots. The God-connection—both good and new—brought by JCCL must be re-established. If it is not, freedom for Christ's kind of courageous word and action in TBW will never happen. Fear will (continue to) carry the day, and mayhem multiply. When Jesus tells the panic-stricken father (Mark 5:36): "Fear not, only believe," he is articulating this very axiom. Fear is un-faith in JCCL. It barricades acts of freedom. Trusting JCCL is freedom. ["Jesus means Freedom," E. Kaesemann once titled one of his books.] Faith-grounded freedom mobilizes folks formerly fearful for acts of freedom, the acts that AJVC calls for in the face of the slaughter in Sri Lanka.

7. Here once more the sequence is important. To get Christians moved to the courageous (and dangerous!) ethics of discipleship, you first have to check the faith factor. AJVC emphasized Paul's fascination with the term "power" (dynamis) for Christ's significance: the cross is the power of God for salvation. Faith in Christ makes that power my own and that generates the freedom for us to enter TBW as Christ's field representatives. "Lord, increase our faith," is step one for any act of Christian freedom. Though we are justified by this faith alone, says Paul, it never remains "alone," but moves directly into TBW as faith active in love.
8. I can't imagine that there aren't such free-by-faith Christ-followers working in TBW of Sri Lanka. But their number may be small, vastly smaller than the official Christian population of the land. But even if I lived there, I'd be ignorant of the actual situation, for faith's freedom is often hidden. That doesn't mean it's absent. It just can't be

photographed. You can't tell by looking whose heart is free, whose is fear-full. It can be faked, although when one's own life is at stake, faked Christian freedom usually fades. Yet faith's kind of freedom pops up in surprising places. Sometimes (most times?) it shows up as "widow's mite" events, where the poor and oppressed themselves give away their lives in words and acts grounded in Christ's "Fear not, only believe."

9. But what is that, someone may say, among so many fear-driven folks, the ones who seem to run the show in Sri Lanka? Granted, fear is perhaps the most powerful force that drives human history in both its macro- and micro-formats. And faith's kind of freedom—also freedom from fear—cannot be legislated, any more than faith itself (trusting Christ) can be coerced. For those who do not, will not, live by such faith—and that includes putative Christians—Paul suggests here and there in his epistles that God has another "system" in place. In that system God works to keep the old creation from totally blowing apart. God gets a modicum of equity and caring done in human society even when fear-filled humans are the only agents God has to implement the program. Paul talks about the law [n.b., not the Gospel] inscribed in human hearts, which he interprets as a plus for common life in our fallen world. He also speaks of the godly coercion exercised by Caesar's "sword." Paul does not think he's thereby promoting violence. His logic is that a sinner's self-interest will more often than not constrain him to do what's right in civil society and get a reward, rather than to do what's wrong and have to pay for it. How this might be linked to TBW



in Sri Lanka is another essay for which I am patently incompetent. Besides, such considerations go beyond the assignment to link JCCL with TBW using the Christological models AJVC gave us. That is what I sought to do above.

- II. **PAULO SUESS "The Gratuitousness of the Presence of Christ in the Broken World of the Poor of Latin America"** Paulo's title already signals the Christology he proposes. He wants to show us that Christ is present, present in his explicit gratuitousness [freely bestowed gift-giving], in the broken world of the poor in Latin America. [Hereafter L.A.] Though he offers no separate Christological section—as AJVC did with his survey of Paul's christological images—this Christology permeates his paper. The 500-year long crucifixion of Latin America's indigenous peoples is the same reality we have in the crucifixion of Jesus. Not just similar (as AJVC saw in the Tamilian crucifixions in Sri Lanka), but all of the same piece. That sameness is more than just the identical suffering, injustice, agony in both parties. In both we have the same redemptive, revelatory, salvific resources, the same good news. At least for L.A. the gospel is an ellipse. Its two centers are JCCL and the corollary messianic power of Amerindian suffering peoples. Put that way it does sound radical. Does the christology of 2 Corinthians 5 invite us to add Amerindians into the claim that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself"? Are the "poor and the Other" co-redeemers with Jesus for the life of the world? Statements from Paulo sound like that. E.g., "The poor and Others...give rise, not only to new inculturations of traditional christology, but to NEW CHRISTOLOGICAL THEOLOGIES." "The poor...the Others...ARE God with us, Emmanuel, Jesus Christ crucified and living amongst us." "The poor, those excluded,

migrants and indigenous peoples [are] bearers of the good news of The Way.” There is a “link between the PRESENCE of the Lord and the life of the poor.” “Jesus Christ [is] present in the penury . . . of the poor and the Others.” He can designate it the “latest linking of [God’s] Third Covenant, a universal, historical and eschatological covenant of the poor and the Others.”

That is forthright speech. In Pretoria we never got around to checking it, to raising the question: Paulo, is it true? What are your grounds, your foundations, for this “new christological theology?” How “new” is it when laid alongside “traditional christology?” The animating agony that moves Paulo in this paper is clear. It is today’s “new” world, the market economy of global capitalism. Its consequences for the people he lives and works with is their never-ending crucifixion, a crucifixion that already has a 500-year history. The Pilates, Herods and centurions were the European conquistadors and all too often the church’s agents who accompanied them. So the polarities in his paper are the crucified and the crucifiers, the victims and the criminals.

When JCCL is brought into the discussion, it is no surprise that the crucified are close to JCCL, and the criminals nowhere near. Yet Paulo would like to bring them (us) nearer to the original JCCL. That entails bringing them nearer to the currently crucified. I sense that this is his strategy: To show us the full-Christic reality—messianic, salvific—in the currently crucified, so that we might thereby see aright what the original JCCL really was and still is.

Not surprisingly, Luke 4 is his grounding text. From the outset this has been the “canon within the canon” for

Latin American liberation theology. Here Jesus appropriates for himself Israel's ancient Jubilee proclamation. Says Paulo: "Jesus takes this unrealized goal [i.e., scant evidence that it ever happened in Israel's history] and makes it the programmatic announcement of his life." His argument to support this rests on three key terms: gratuitousness (sharing), closeness (incarnation, inculturation), and universality (non-exclusion, going beyond the boundaries of blood and race).

I'm not sure what gratuitousness all means in Portuguese. The signals I hear in Paulo's use of it as an English term are that creation is gift-laden and God is fundamentally a gift-giver. The resources for life on the planet are freebies. When they are commoditized, bought and sold, claimed by owners, have a market price placed upon them—that's already diabolic, in the literal meaning of the term: smashing them to smithereens. That brings chaos into the divine plan. Creation in all its parts is freely given, freely received, and therefore freely to be given further. Call it sharing. So also God's last great act of gratuitousness, the cross, where God's own son is shared for the life of the world.

Closeness is the antithesis of separation, "us vs. them" indifference and exclusion. It signals "proximity of the poor/Others." Paulo is intent to "make a distinction between 'poor' and 'Others'." Though "poverty is very near to otherness," Otherness is a cultural term, not an economic one. In Latin America (or anywhere else for that matter) poverty does not energize for action or for survival. "Thanks to their cultures – and not their poverty – people live and survive, repel death, reproduce, and celebrate their life. It was not because of their

poverty that the indigenous peoples of L.A. survived 500 years of colonization, but because of their otherness.”

Although the culture of the colonizers was death for the indigenous peoples, they survive to this day. Why? There is power in their “otherness,” power enough to hold back the juggernaut of the colonial culture that sought to kill it. This cultural otherness—alterity is Paulo’s fancy term—has persisted throughout millennia—not just the past 500 years—in Latin American peoples. For Paulo this becomes an indigenous “gospel.” He links it to God’s own “otherness,” the core of which, as we’ve seen above, is gratuitousness. From there is it but a small step to put it right alongside its mirror image in JCCL. Result: the elliptical christology of JCCL plus Amerindian suffering servants. These two centers together ground his hope that even in the face of the global market octopus, all is not lost. A transformed society of gratuitousness can yet come to pass.

What does this mean for missiologists? Paulo calls missiologists to reflective thinking (reflect-T) on these realities so that our craft can become (reflect-M) mirrors reflecting “the perspective of the Kingdom and the presence of the Lord in history . . . to TBW of the poor in L.A.” “Missiology is involved in the struggle to save the memory of the poor/0thers,” not for reasons of nostalgia lest they be forgotten, but for the power they offer for the “transformation of our societies.” The cultural alterity native to Latin America is “the gratuitousness of the presence of Christ in the broken world of the poor in L.A.” We must not only cherish it, but appropriate it for our own discipleship. Not only do “we” not need to bring JCCL to “them;” we need to receive the JCCL they still have to supplant the erroneous conquest-christologies so

common among us. This leads Paulo to call for “Indian Theologies in L.A. . . . with their own missiology.” They are “protagonists” for the rest of us to learn about “missiological exogamy,” the antithesis of missiology practiced as “ecclesiocentric incest.” For the missiological establishment [IAMS?] “this exogamy—the seeking of a bride outside one’s own tribe, not in the New York or Tokyo stock market, but in the midst of the poor and the Others—is not an optional attitude, but a command of the Lord.” Paulo could hardly make that more explicit.

Universality signals what the word catholic meant in the ancient creeds, if I read this paper aright. God’s gratuitous project for the world is one where everybody plays. Christ majored in making the outsiders insiders. So the poor/Others are not just add-ons, they are first-string players. Gratuitousness is God’s alternative globalization venture to counter totalitarianisms of all times. In our day that means the “restrictive and ‘exclusive’ [economic] globalization” now encircling the planet. Paulo’s is not a call to “integrate” these outsiders into the ideology of market-globalism, but to replace it with the “missiology of the poor/Other.” “The mutilated life of the poor, the excluded and the Others provides a constant indicator that social relations as a whole must be changed.” “Jesus Christ [is] present in the penury . . . of the poor and the Others.” Because the poor and Others are planet-wide already, and in Paulo’s perspective intrinsically Christic by definition he designates this universality as God’s “Third Covenant, a universal, historical and eschatological covenant of the poor and the Others.”

**Comment:**

Paulo proposes his Christic ellipse as a sample of the

“new christological theologies” arising from the poor and the Other. He deems it new in contrast to “traditional christologies.” That invites us to take the “old” ones and compare and contrast. The old ones in my seminary days 50 years ago were said to be three-fold:

- A. Christ as victor over the principalities and powers (Irenaeus)
- B. Christ as substitutionary satisfaction (Anselm)
- C. Christ as moral example (Abelard).

### **Anselm: Christ's Substitutionary Satisfaction**

Paulo by-passes Anselm entirely. For Anselm the playing field for the work of Christ is the fractured relationship between God and humankind, all humans. Paulo doesn't show JCCL to be the power that restores sinners to fellowship with God. In what he has given us here there is no “God-problem” bedeviling humanity. Concerning the poor/Others of L.A. he speaks not a word of their need to be reconciled to God. The folks who are in trouble with God and do need reconciling are those crucifying them. Yet they too do not need JCCL to alter their lethal relationship with God. Rather JCCL is primarily pedagogical—to show them, teach them, reveal to them, that God is not an oppressor, and neither should they be. And if they/we cannot see this in the N.T. or in the praxis of the church, he will help us see JCCL in the crucified poor/Others of L.A.

There are elements of Irenaeus' Christus Victor and of Abelard's moral example, I think, in Paulo's proposal, but they are distinctively nuanced.

### **Irenaeus: Christus Victor**

Christ and his cross are paradigmatic for Paulo as God's victory over all the oppressions that humans inflict on

fellow-humans. Jesus' resurrection is the ultimate ground for that confidence. Just how is not clearly spelled out other than that Easter is the last word in the story and Good Friday is not. But Irenaeus' Christus Victor had a different agenda. It was not human oppressors with whom he contended. For Irenaeus Christ was victorious over trans-human oppressors, big ones. Before these oppressors the whole human race is powerless. They are the unholy trinity of sin, death and the devil.

Paulo doesn't discuss them either in his occasional references to traditional Christology, nor in the one he proposes, the two-centered ellipse. Now it may be that he works with a "realized soteriology," the notion that since Christ's Good Friday and Easter is now past history, those mega-oppressors are indeed defeated, and thus of little consequence any more, "no big deal." The oppressors still vexing humanity, possibly the fallout of these ancient tyrants, are fellow-humans and the structures of crucifixion they devise. Paulo might be saying that these present and active oppressors haven't yet heard, or don't believe, that the unholy trinity has been undone. So they continue in service (and servitude) to these primal oppressors—even though they are effectively passe'—and thus human oppression continues.

Not so Irenaeus. He read the NT to be saying that though JCCL has tossed them out of the heavenly courtroom, these mega-oppressors were still at work on earth. All people die, Hitlers happen. What is already true in heaven needs yet to be made true on earth. Here on earth, yes in Latin America, the unholy trinity (not just its human devotees) still rages. Until Christ conquers these mega-oppressors in the hearts of those tyrannized by them, or in the hearts of their willing followers, people-to-people

oppression won't go away. Coping with earthly oppressors and ignoring the mega-ones is symptom-therapy, a band-aid on the boil, a plaster over the cancer.

### **Anselm: Christ as Moral Exemplar**

Much of Paulo's proposal has links to Abelard's Christology. But again "with a twist." For the most part Abelard's agenda was ethics, to get Christians to live and act like Christ's disciples. For that, of course, the Master himself is the prime exemplar. So "model your life according to his" is Abelard's proposal. He was a human and he could do it, so can you. God's goal for fallen humanity is restoring them to righteousness. That is the fundamental reason why God sent Jesus. As moral example he goes all the way to the cross, suffering for others, trusting God all the way. Human lives modelled after his will conclude as his did. Easter victory will be ours as well. That's Abelard simplified, I grant, but not distorted.

Paulo too does parallel modelling, but his universe is not at all calm as Abelard thought his was. Paulo's world is in turmoil, terrible turmoil. The "bad guys" are not just doing bad things and needing a moral exemplar. It's a lot worse than that. Nowadays they've got the whole world in their hands. Not only are they crucifying the poor and the Others in that world, they are crucifying the planet itself. Paulo's paralleling focuses on the cross, Christ's and that of the poor/Others. They mirror-image each other. Yet the latter do not need the former as source or power to do what they are already doing. Already as they confront their crucifiers they are living life gratuitously—even before the gospel of JCCL ever gets to them. If/when JCCL does get reflected to them it is confirmation of the universality of what they are doing.



Both are allied to God by the fact of their suffering, since God ["by definition" in liberation theology] makes a preferential option for the poor. Because both have God on their side their ultimate victory is assured. But is Jesus really necessary in Paulo's christology for bringing Good News (something good, and something new) that is not already there in the L.A. culture of the poor/0thers? That is the question.

*[The six Christology metaphors AJVC showed us above do not all easily fit into the three models just discussed. E.g., Paul's picture from the marketplace of the "sweet swap"—ownership exchange of our sins for Christ's righteousness—correlates to none of the above.]*

### **Summary.**

Since Paulo is our new IAMS president, there's a possibility that we can recoup the conversation we missed at Hammanskraal. If so, I'd suggest pursuing two questions—one on TBW in L.A., the other on God's gratuitousness in JCCL in the N.T.

1. Put bluntly, Paulo, are L.A. poor/0thers sinners? That may sound crass, but it's a fundamental Christian issue. Do they on their own have a God-problem diagnostically distinct from the oppression-problem that undeniably tortures them? In the Reformation rhetoric of the Augsburg Confession (1530) sin is described as the malady of the human race "since the time of Adam." Its specs are that humans are "without fear of God, without trust in God," and—in place of these two real absences—that sinners live their lives "incurved into themselves." If L.A. poor/0thers ipso facto already replicate what JCCL represents, how did they get rid of that

primal malady?

2. In discussing Paulo's christology—elliptical, as I read it—we need to hear more about the reality of those two centers. My question: Is God's gratuitousness at one center the same thing as God's gratuitousness at the other? I hear the N.T. witness saying no, i.e., that there is something new, brand new, in the gratuitousness coming our way in the Christ-center of the ellipse. Whereas the gift-giving coming from the other center is a grace that obligates the receivers, God's gift-giving in Christ runs on a new formula—"scandalously" new—a gift-giving that liberates but does not obligate at all. It even liberates us from failed obligations that pile up from our gift-receiving at that other center day in and day out throughout our lives.

**So we need to ask:**

what changed, what was different in our world after Good Friday/Easter happened? The changes signalled by Paul's 6 soteriological metaphors, the ones AJVC showed us above, are cosmic. They are all changes for the good. They all signal changes in a sinner's God-problem. In Christ God deals with sinners differently, precisely at the point of what they've been doing on the receiving end of all that primordial gratuitousness. I didn't find Paulo following his apostolic namesake in attending to the God-problem we humans have. Maybe he's done it elsewhere—after all you can't say everything in 9 pages—but then we need to have it connected here. And that second center, the poor/Other. What gives them parallel status to God's gratuitousness in JCCL? What gives their crucifixions power—both for themselves, and for others?

I'm writing this on Good Friday. Three crucifixions are in

the Gospel text for the day. Only one is intrinsically salvific. Of the two men to the right and left of the center figure one does come into the orbit of that salvation. But he wasn't there at the outset just by being on a cross. His dying takes on saving value by virtue of his eleventh-hour appeal to the central figure and the response he receives. In this transaction the salvific power flows in only one direction. The man on the other cross dies disconnected to Christ. His crucifixion does have meaning, but it is not salvific. Rather it is "the just sentence of condemnation" for one who "does not fear God." He receives "due reward for his deeds." One dies with his God-problem healed, the other not.

"Bringing humanity into the presence of the Lord," a definition Paulo offers for mission, is not automatically good news. The result could be "just reward for one's deeds." Even entering the presence of Christ crucified is not ipso facto good news apart from the transaction reported in the first case. Can we extrapolate from this crucifixion paradigm that until the God-problem gets "fixed" in both oppressors and oppressed, God's just sentence and due reward for deeds is what all participants can expect? With no faith-connection to the One in the center on Good Friday, how can anyone's crucifixion replace fear with freedom, greed with gratuitousness, estrangement with closeness, self-incurvature with universality, anywhere in human society?

III. **TINYIKO SAM MALULEKE "Christ Crucified Among African Cross Bearers"** Tinyiko's presentation was one of two shorter papers presented as last-minute fill-ins for the plenary lecture spot left vacant when Isabel Phiri was unable to come to the conference. In the copy I brought home ("unedited draft") he devotes most of the text to

surveying the scene of African Christianity today and only launches into Christology. But that christological excursus strikes a note not heard in the first two papers. It might even contradict them on the subject of the linkage between the crucifixion of Jesus and the crucifixion of peoples in Sri Lanka and L.A. Although African Christians draw strength in corollating their suffering with Christ crucified, Tinyiko says, they are quick to note the difference between the two. There is identification, but that is “only one half of the story. The other half is an emphasis on his ‘otherness’ and his ‘difference’ from us.” So it is yes, and then yes but. He cites Setiloane’s poem to show the identification, the Yes:

*“Yet for us it is when he is on the cross,  
This Jesus of Nazareth, with holed hands  
and open side, like a beast of sacrifice:  
when he is stripped, naked like us,  
Browed and sweating water and blood  
in the heat of the sun,  
Yet silent,  
That we cannot resist him.”*

The “but no” Tinyiko finds documented in “many sermons and songs.” Even “when he is stripped, naked like us,” the same Christian confessors say “There is ‘no one like him.’” Tinyiko continues: “Africans affirm that human beings fail much too often, especially in the face of temptations and calamities, but [as the popular hymn says] Jesus never fails. African Christians realize “that human beings do not and cannot adequately match Jesus in the glory of his brokenness.” Citing Miroslav Volf he goes on to say: “The suffering of Christ cannot be totally and

exclusively taken over by the poor . . . . Such a total take-over would be contrary to the self-giving grace of the Crucified God, which is at the very heart of the Christian faith.”

Is this not a clear “contra” to the first two plenary presentations, especially to Paulo’s? So the stage was set for substantive debate on fundamental Christology, but we never got around to it.

Much of the rest of Tinyiko’s paper chronicles the “brokenness of Africa,” the scarcity of hope, and the contradictions present in the “massive Christian presence on the continent.” Yet he does not conclude in hopelessness. Only after confessing our brokenness, he says, “can we come to appreciate the reality and worth of Jesus’ brokenness for ourselves.” That double action, penitential confession and Gospel-grounded faith, leads him to his final sentence. “In this way we may be able to reflect something of both the death and the resurrection of Christ.”

There’s a solid assertion for further discussion: the practice of confession and absolution as one way to reflect JCCL in TBW. Isn’t that what Tinyiko is actually proposing? I think so.

#### **PHILOMENA N. MWAURA**

presented the companion paper to Tinyiko’s. I never got a printed copy of it and my notes are insufficient. To compensate I offer the paragraph from the “Listening Committee’s Report” presented in our closing session. Philomena’s “presentation related to the meaning of brokenness for women in Africa. We were introduced to the amazing contradiction that although women are marginalized

in society and suffer injustice, sometimes through dehumanizing laws of traditional culture, these are the persons who respond with joy and enthusiasm to the message of the crucified Christ in whose brokenness peoples' hurts, desperations, fears, anxieties and struggles have found meaning. Healing has spurred hope and a yearning for the joys to be experienced in the resurrection. It remains a paradox that the church has been an instrument of liberation and entrapment of women at the same time as it has ignored certain sectors of the very group it claims to speak for. It is not surprising then that women are drawn to African Independent Churches where the value of life is emphasized and the gifts of women are received."

These were the major plenary papers. We did have one more plenary presentation, the presidential address from CHUN CHAE OK, "Mission in a New Millennium." She too spoke to christological matters and I'll review her words here in my closing paragraphs.

### **CHUN CHAE OK**

Chun Chae's call for new missiology in the new millennium gave gentle critique of missiologies past. Granting that "full consensus on the definition of missions" among our IAMS membership "is difficult," she nevertheless offered her proposal, "start[ing] where my context challenges me." Two patent pieces of her own context are that she is an Asian and a woman. She did not pointedly chastise missiologies past—and missions too—for being so Eurocentric and a mostly male club. Yet what she offered for the future made it perfectly clear.

1. Mission in the new millennium must move to full and equal presence of the womanly half of the human race, even if it were not true that women comprise

more than half of the worldwide church.

2. The same holds true for Asian inclusion, the continent where half of all the world's billions live. The numbers present at IAMS 10 did not reflect either of these two facts of life.

Most pointed, though gentle, oh so gentle, was Chun Chae's critique of us missiologists. Though committed to reflecting JCCL in and into TBW, the first candidate for working on the reflection-M agenda is in the person and life of the missiologist. That, she reminded us, was Paul's own paradigm. In his own biographical crucifixions and resurrections on the mission ramparts he mirrored the very message he was promoting. Citing Asian missiologists she spoke of "misrepresentations of the gospel in different aspects of mission work." Her focus was not on policy or strategy issues, but "misrepresentations of the gospel . . . deeply rooted in the very lives of mission-promoting people." The brokenness of TBW is not just "over there," but in us too. Mirroring JCCL into that brokenness in us amounts to repentance and absolution. Tinyiko above concluded on the same theme.

The "new" items for missiology in the new millennium are:

1. "The missionary movement is in the South."
2. It's not mission TO today's broken world, but the people from TBW, "the very poor people are [the] missionary people."
3. "It is new that transforming mission is to be begun within mission leadership." She calls us to "a shift of missionary reflection from intellectual discipline to inner transformation of the reflectors." To play on Pogo's famous line, she's telling us: "We have met the problem and it is us."

That could be a wide, very wide, critique. To move away

from the Western ethos of the Enlightenment [reflecting-T] to “a longing to be changed within ourselves with newness of life and with honest evaluation of our prejudice on different situations and persons, greediness for comfortable living, popularity, and recognition.” That’s repentance again. Her call entails “reflecting-T” on defects both in ourselves and in our own linkage to JCCL, so that we ourselves be rightly re-rooted. From which could indeed come the “reflecting-M” that is at the center of Christ’s mission to the world.

In earlier days of my seminary teaching in the USA, we debated the wisdom (even the ethics) of inflicting the Enlightenment on our grad students coming from Asia and Africa. The exegetes carried the day, so we continued to do it. The reasons were: you can’t just pretend it never happened; the western world is shaped by it, so “they” have got to know it. Many of those students “knew their Bible” better than some of us profs did, but we thought we were doing the right thing. Nowadays there is even more reason to question such a policy, especially in the West, where post-modernism pooh-poohs the Enlightenment. So Chun Chae may not be calling for the impossible. Granted she mentions neither the Enlightenment nor Post-modernism, but her words in the paragraphs above are not just an aside, a minor point, in her presidential address. She concludes the paragraph: “I understand that this kind of newness is the core of mission in the new millennium.”

Her address concludes with her list of the component parts for Mission in a New Millennium. Mission is cooperation, is women and youth involvement, is restoration, is celebrating and sharing life, is living the gospel, is evangelism and local church, is unity and unification, is reconciliation. Two of these bear on the project I’m



engaged in here. One relates to the subject just discussed above. In “Mission as living the gospel” she speaks to “the real problem . . . the gap between words and acts in mission leadership.” That’s the problem of missionaries themselves being reflectors-M of JCCL in whatever world, broken or otherwise, that they serve.

From Mission as living the gospel she segues to her most explicit christological statements. Actually they are more Christ-confessional statements. Alongside a citation from John Stott critiquing modernity [sc. the Enlightenment] and postmodernity, she says: “Whether in east or west, south or north, there must be a simple statement of who Christ is in His unique role in salvation history – crucified and resurrected for the salvation of human beings as revealed in the scriptures.” Both missionaries and missiologists “are challenged to go back afresh to the Scriptures . . . to grasp the core of the gospel in the heap of cultural and religious data.”

Mission is evangelism, “sharing the spirituality of the cross and resurrection.” In the context of Asia’s ancient and new religions, she “call[s] to return to biblical pattern of mission. In the East there is no greater attraction and meaning for people of other values and faiths than the person of Jesus Christ and His redemptive work. In old religions, treasures of teaching are found for moral and ethical living. The need is to behold the glory of the Lord.”

Chun Chae gives her understanding of that Lord and Christ in her final paragraph, “Mission as reconciliation.” She reviews the reconciliation theology (the “sweet swap”) of 2 Cor. 5, the text we’ve examined before way back at the beginning with Klaus Schaefer’s pre-conference essay. “God

was in Christ reconciling the world” means that “The cross of Christ is unique. He died for our sins. He died in our place. God in his amazing love substituted himself for us, being our sin and dying our death.”

Mindful of humanity’s “God-problem” she counsels us “not to minimize sin and true guilt. Sin is a rebellion against God.” Its remedy? “In the cross God made reconciliation.” How does that reconciliation become ours? “By his grace alone, on the ground of Christ crucified alone, through faith alone.” What does the life of those reconciled look like? “A change so radical that no imagery can do it justice except death and resurrection with Christ, dying the old life of self-centeredness, and rising to a new life of burning love for others.” That’s Chun Chae’s proposal for a new millennium of reflecting-T on JCCL and her encouragement for our reflecting-M in TBW.

### **Conclusion.**

Some IAMS colleagues, responding to Part I of my IAMS review, suggest that our conferences are not the venue for the Christological conversations—and likely conflicts—I said I’d hoped for. So I should be grateful for the small blessings. I am grateful—and a number of the blessings were not small at all! Nevertheless I recommend to the planners for IAMS XI that they brainstorm possibilities for a program architecture that would open doors for such things. Vis-a-vis the past conference, one mechanical modification might be to have papers from plenary presenters in our hands before the assembly gathers. Then we could use plenary program time for face-to-face conversations between the authors of those papers. Grant, for the moment, that my lengthy review above is partially on target. Then a plenum discussion between the principals would concretely ask Paulo to argue his “new christology”

vis-a-vis Klaus holding forth his reading of Paul's christology, with AJVC's and Philomena and Tinyiko making the case for their Asian and African christologies—and Chun Chae asking them all to consider the value of her Asian and womanly christology with its patently evangelical contours.

The way I've just proposed it is clumsy, but the project is worth trying, isn't it? Where else in the Christian world do such foundational debates take place? If mission-minded folks can't do it, who can? Besides, we're all friends, not just IAMS members. Better yet, we're sisters and brothers members of an even Larger Network, committed to a Planetary Project.

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## Street Ministry

Colleagues,

Lutheran Urban Mission Society [LUMS] is a multiplex ecumenical venture in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. The society's congregation is the broken people in Vancouver, especially those in the city's downtown "eastside." Pastor Brian Heinrich (Seminex grad '83) is called to be "street priest" in LUMS' ministry. In November '98 we visited Brian and saw LUMS "live." That word "live" fits in more ways than one. Brian's words below are taken from the LUMS Newsletter, Spring 2000.

Peace & Joy!

## **“Street Ministry”**

The first few words of our LUMS Mission Statement read “In response to the gospel...” then go on to describe what we as a serving community do. But it is those first few words that I want to focus on briefly here. Words too readily overlooked in our hurry to get on with the rest.

All the energy, resources, time, enthusiasm, the whole work & mission of LUMS is evoked, is a response. Response supposes a preceding initiative that stimulates a reaction. That prime mover is the Gospel. LUMS is a reaction of the Gospel. It is because of what God has done in & through Jesus of Nazareth that LUMS has occurred.

This is not incidental – this is intrinsically fundamental. On the surface anyone watching might be unable to distinguish how any of the ministries of LUMS are distinctively different from many of the other social services available to the people of Vancouver’s downtown eastside. But what spawned LUMS was and is the Holy Spirit.

Our starting place is not the social action we do, but instead the gracious loving welcoming God who manifests Himself in the life, death & resurrection of Jesus the Anointed.

This is important because it is our heartbeat. It is our Source. It is what animates & enables everything we do in this neighbourhood.

It could easily be overlooked in the day to day chaos of the demands of survival among the hungry, the addicted, the

homeless, the mentally ill, and those living with HIV and AIDS.

Except that folks keep asking “why?” Why do you do this? What enables you to do this? “Author, author!”

And it affects (as well as effects) how we do what we do. It is not just about the quantity, it is about the quality.

Every gesture of loving support, every soul listened to, every mouthful of food offered, and every blanket given has the Christ codicil attached to it.

This is important because it honours, & acknowledges the Divine initiative. Remember the Lukan story commonly known as the prodigal son that we often hear during this Lenten season; Luke reports that while the wayward breast-beating son is making his way homeward reciting his plea for forgiveness, the father scanning the horizon with binoculars sees him while he is still a great way off, then runs out to greet and welcome the child home again. The point is that the father is ceaselessly scanning, searching the horizon for the earliest slightest hint of what might look like his beloved child. Like all parents of the disappeared he is hoping against hope and never gives up. Then the old man hurries out to embrace the truant child. He takes the initiative and goes to the child not waiting in parental dignity to be approached, but gushing his pleasure at the return before the child has the opportunity to get a word in edgewise about his about-face. This describes the Divine zealous love for us.

This is the character of the God of Jesus. Who before we speak, hears us (Psalm). This is the God we announce by our caring presence in the pain and chaos of the downtown eastside. If we were to press some of the folk we serve to describe the God LUMS proclaims in Word, Sacraments and service they might say “The God of LUMS is one Who welcomes indiscriminately to His feast,

the hungry, the cold, the addicted, the HIV positive, the homosexual and transsexual folk, others with psychiatric difficulties, wounded first nations peoples, and assorted other social outcasts and disenfranchised." Sounds like "good news to the poor"!!!

"Why?" "Why do we do these acts of love?" The action of God provokes like [action] in us. So to echo the Apostle, We love because God has first loved us.

And that impacts on how we do what we do. It is not enough just to engage in acts of justice. It is how we engage in these actions. Each is done "in the Name of," not owning the credit ourselves but telling by how we do where & why the credit is truly due. The very practical frontline nitty gritty work of LUMS is mission, is evangelical because it is animated by and perpetuates the love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

In a future installment – reflections on the following consequent phrases in our mission statement: "in response to the Gospel and the needs we see around us ..."

Your street priest,  
Pastor Brian